

IN THE CLAIMS:

Please cancel claims 23-45 and add claim 48 in accordance with the following listing showing the status of all claims in the application.

1. (Currently Amended) An apparatus for extracting, transporting and/or releasing liquid or semi-liquid material, said apparatus comprising:

- (a) a container;
- (b) an inlet/outlet ~~disposed beneath the container when the apparatus is in its operational orientation~~, for allowing material to enter and exit the apparatus;
- (c) a gateway disposed within a path between the container and the inlet/outlet, the gateway comprising an enclosed channel that has an interior surface; and
- (d) pressure-control means for controlling ~~air~~ gas pressure within the container,

wherein in tracing a pathway through the enclosed channel of the gateway, starting from the inlet/outlet side of the gateway and ending at the container side of the gateway, with the apparatus in its operational position, the pathway first passes above a first point on the interior surface of the enclosed channel and then underneath a second point on the interior surface of the enclosed channel,

wherein the first point is higher than the second point with the apparatus in its operational position,

wherein the apparatus is configured such that, when in operational use, the material entering the inlet/outlet does not flow into or past the pressure-control means, and

wherein the inlet/outlet has a minimum dimension that is at least ¼ inch in length.

2. (Original) An apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the gateway is disposed in close proximity to the inlet/outlet.
3. (Currently Amended) An apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the pressure-control means comprises a pump for pumping ~~air~~ gas out of the container.
4. (Original) An apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the pressure-control means comprises a valve configured to control an opening between the container and ambient air.
5. (Original) An apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the container is flexible.
6. (Original) An apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the gateway comprises a rigid fitting.
7. (Original) An apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the gateway comprises an S-shaped tube.
8. (Original) An apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the pressure-control means connects to the container via a flexible hose of at least 25 feet in length.
9. (Original) An apparatus according to claim 8, wherein the flexible hose is at least 50 feet in length.

10. (Original) An apparatus according to claim 8, wherein the flexible hose encloses a pneumatic hose.

11. (Original) An apparatus according to claim 8, wherein the apparatus, from and including the flexible hose to and including the inlet/outlet, is at least 35 feet in length.

12. (Original) An apparatus according to claim 11, wherein the apparatus, from and including the flexible hose to and including the inlet/outlet, is substantially entirely flexible.

13. (Original) An apparatus according to claim 1, further comprising separator means disposed between the inlet/outlet and the gateway for collecting solids.

14. (Original) An apparatus according to claim 13, wherein the separator means comprises a vertically extending first tube enclosed within a vertically extending second tube, wherein the first tube is open at its top, and wherein the second tube has a bottom surface for collecting material that spills out of the top of the first tube.

15. (Original) An apparatus according to claim 13, wherein at least a portion of the separator means is readily detachable and re-attachable for emptying material that collects in the separator means.

16. (Original) An apparatus according to claim 14, wherein both the first tube and the second tube are flexible.

17. (Original) An apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the inlet/outlet has a minimum dimension that is at least $\frac{1}{2}$ inch in length.

18. (Original) An apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the inlet/outlet has a minimum dimension that is at least $\frac{3}{4}$ inch in length.

19. (Original) An apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the inlet/outlet has a minimum dimension that is at least 1 inch in length.

20. (Original) An apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the inlet/outlet has a minimum dimension that is at least $1\frac{1}{2}$ inch in length.

21. (Original) An apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the inlet/outlet has a minimum dimension that is at least 2 inches in length.

22. (Original) An apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the inlet/outlet has a minimum dimension that is at least 4 inches in length.

23. (Canceled)

24. (Canceled)

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25. (Canceled)

26. (Canceled)

27. (Canceled)

28. (Canceled)

29. (Canceled)

30. (Canceled)

31. (Canceled)

32. (Canceled)

33. (Canceled)

34. (Canceled)

35. (Canceled)

36. (Canceled)

37. (Canceled)

38. (Canceled)

39. (Canceled)

40. (Canceled)

41. (Canceled)

42. (Canceled)

43. (Canceled)

44. (Canceled)

45. (Canceled)

46. (Currently Amended) An apparatus for extracting, transporting and/or releasing liquid or semi-liquid material, said apparatus comprising:

(a) a container;

- (b) an inlet/outlet ~~disposed beneath the container when the apparatus is in its operational orientation~~, for allowing material to enter and exit the apparatus;
 - (c) a gateway disposed within a path between the container and the inlet/outlet, the gateway comprising an enclosed channel that has an interior surface; and
 - (d) pressure-control means for controlling ~~air~~ gas pressure within the container,
- wherein in tracing a pathway through the enclosed channel of the gateway, starting from the inlet/outlet side of the gateway and ending at the container side of the gateway, with the apparatus in its operational position, the pathway first passes above a first point on the interior surface of the enclosed channel and then underneath a second point on the interior surface of the enclosed channel,
- wherein the first point is higher than the second point with the apparatus in its operational position,
- wherein the apparatus is configured such that, when in operational use, the material entering the inlet/outlet does not flow into or past the pressure-control means, and
- wherein the inlet/outlet has a size and a shape such that a vacuum alone would not be sufficient to prevent water from falling out of the inlet/outlet.

47. (Currently Amended) An apparatus for extracting, transporting and/or releasing liquid or semi-liquid material, said apparatus comprising:

- (a) a container;
- (b) an inlet/outlet ~~disposed beneath the container when the apparatus is in its operational orientation~~, for allowing material to enter and exit the apparatus;

- (c) a gateway disposed within a path between the container and the inlet/outlet, the gateway comprising an enclosed channel that has an interior surface; and
- (d) pressure-control means coupled to the container for controlling ~~air~~ gas pressure within the container,

wherein in tracing a pathway through the enclosed channel of the gateway, starting from the inlet/outlet side of the gateway and ending at the container side of the gateway, with the apparatus in its operational position, the pathway first passes above a first point on the interior surface of the enclosed channel and then underneath a second point on the interior surface of the enclosed channel,

wherein the first point is higher than the second point with the apparatus in its operational position,

wherein the apparatus is configured such that, when in operational use, the material entering the inlet/outlet does not flow into or past the pressure-control means, and

wherein the pressure-control means comprises at least one of an electrically or mechanically actuated pump or valve.

48. (New) An apparatus for extracting, transporting and/or releasing liquid or semi-liquid material, said apparatus comprising:

- (a) a container;
- (b) an inlet/outlet for allowing material to enter and exit the apparatus;
- (c) a gateway disposed within a path between the container and the inlet/outlet, the gateway comprising an enclosed channel that has an interior surface; and
- (d) pressure-control means for controlling gas pressure within the container,

wherein in tracing a pathway through the enclosed channel of the gateway, starting from the inlet/outlet side of the gateway and ending at the container side of the gateway, with the apparatus in its operational position, the pathway first passes above a first point on the interior surface of the enclosed channel and then underneath a second point on the interior surface of the enclosed channel,

wherein the first point is higher than the second point with the apparatus in its operational position,

wherein the apparatus is configured such that, when in operational use, the material does not come into contact with any moving part, and

wherein the inlet/outlet has a minimum dimension that is at least $\frac{1}{4}$ inch in length.